PANTHEISM AND PERSONAL IMMORTALITY[1]

THE inquiring mind, in science and in philosophy, is actuated by different motives. Prudence impels it to undertake those investigations which promise definite results. But wisdom compels it to grapple also with some problems of vital importance despite their baffling character. The problem of human destiny is one of the latter sort. If we are to deal intelligently with it, we should understand what kind of answer we are warranted in expecting. The various sciences abound in topics that admit of a factual statement which can be learned from those who have ascertained the facts. The question of personal immortality requires a different treatment, and we should be starting wrong if we set out to get scientific knowledge of life after death.

This is an important point, and we should understand it clearly to avoid misapprehension. Ask Job's question: "If a man die, shall he live again?" A simple answer, yes or no, would scarcely enlighten us, unless we consider first the meaning of the question—what the answer to it would signify. Yes, we may be told, a man shall live and does live after his death, in the memory of his survivors and in his influence on them; or, yes, his soul or spiritual essence survives the dissolution of his body. But no, it may be argued, there can be no survival of soul or mind after the body with its organs of consciousness has perished; and as to social survival in memory or influence, it is all very unstable and temporary, and in any case it does not concern the destiny of the man himself. Clearly we are not here answering Job's question but

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only making a little progress in understanding it and its difficulties.

It is a commonplace of philosophy that some of the deepest problems are basically problems of interpretation. We cannot settle them and dispose of them, but we can try to clarify them, to see what insight into reality they help us to attain. The problem of immortality is a problem in the interpretation of personality. By reflecting on the destiny of man we may hope to probe deeper into the nature of man and into the nature of reality that includes men and personal careers. This sort of inquiry is appropriate to our theme, and we should pursue it as far as we are able.

We shall mention several aspects of our vast problem and then select one of them for more careful examination. So we may ask: How could a man's soul exist and be active after the death of his body? Early in primitive societies men had a consciousness of a certain weird duality in their being. They knew, of course, their obvious material body; but on the other hand, there was their soul or spirit, the elusive core or essence of their existence, subtle and mysterious. Even during its present life the soul leaves the body and has strange adventures of its own in dreams and visions. Left helpless in prolonged unconsciousness, the body without its soul dies and decays. What then becomes of the soul that has lost its body? Primitive reflection had a choice of two answers which were developed into capital doctrines of the main religions.

One of these answers to the riddle of man's destiny is the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. The soul and the body normally live together and need each other. Though the soul leaves the body in dreams, it returns to it on awakening. The unduly lengthened absence of the soul proves disastrous to the body. But how does the death and disintegration of the body affect the future career of the soul? Surely it

must find and inhabit another body. This doctrine of transmigration or metempsychosis was widespread in primitive speculation. It was later advocated by the Pythagoreans and by Plato. Its most extensive development, however, was in Brahmanic India.

An alternative answer to the question about the soul's destiny proceeded from the reflection that the soul does separate from the body, in sleep, in states of unconsciousness. The soul, then, can exist and act by itself. The primitive mind reasoned: when the body dies and decays, the soul continues somehow in a disembodied state. This is the so-called ghost theory, which in its more developed forms has been distinguished as the specific belief in the soul's immortality.

These two doctrines of human destiny have been explored in their historical ramifications, and critical students have sought to sustain or to unsettle each of them by searching examination. Even now we can hardly turn aside from them without mentioning one line of analysis that has proved very fruitful. In both of these doctrines we may note the progressive ascendency of moral evaluations. The soul's transmigration or its disembodied existence after the death of the body have both been regarded as subject to the principle of retribution. The soul is reborn into the sort of body to which God's justice assigns it, high or low, noble or debased, as it may deserve. So likewise the belief in a disembodied state develops into elaborate doctrines of ultimate rewards and punishments for saints and sinners, in heaven and hell, as we find them in Zoroastrian, Christian, and Mohammedan theologies. This is essentially a moral approach to the problem of immortality. It has led to more searching studies of the career and finality of persons, in which the recognition of the eternal conservation of spiritual values has been a dominant principle and has proved very enlightening.

As men's thought on their destiny centers upon the principle of retribution under God's just providence and the abiding reality of personal values, we may note a very significant relation between the idea of immortality and the conception of God. The study of this relation of ideas is of philosophical as well as religious interest. The roots of our idea of human destiny intertwine with the roots of our idea of God. This correlation will be the subject of our approach to the problem of personal immortality. We shall consider how men's beliefs about their destiny have reflected and also influenced their ideas of God and of the ultimate nature of things. Our special inquiry has been indicated in our title: "Pantheism and Personal Immortality." Pantheism is not only a fundamental alternative conception of God but also a tendency or a direction of emphasis which, in greater or lesser degree, characterizes many theologies and philosophies of religion. One of the surest ways of recognizing and appraising this pantheistic slant of thought is by considering its approach to the problem of personal immortality.

The term "pantheism" comes from two Greek words meaning "all-God." It designates the doctrine that God is the basic unity and essence of all beings. God and the world, ultimate reality, are one. Sometimes this may be only a way of explaining God's nature by explaining it away. "God" is then merely the world, the sum-total of existence. But the true religious pantheist means to express something radically different. He concentrates on the idea of God's infinite and all-permeating reality. Infinite Deity is, in the full sense, real. Finite beings, as finite, fall short of expressing reality adequately. They are truly real only in their relation to the Infinite, in their ultimate unity with God. So Emerson sang for us again the ancient Brahmanic chant of pantheism:

They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

While pantheism has tended to depreciate the reality of the finite, of particular things and persons, it has also recognized the ultimate reality of the least of them, when considered in relation to God. In the least of them the whole universe is revealed. This is the emphasis in Tennyson's lyric, familiar to everyone:

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but *if* I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

Pantheistic beliefs and tendencies have been widespread across the entire history of religion and philosophy. Without any exhaustive survey, we may note some of the main instances. The outstanding example in oriental religions is the mystical doctrine of the Upanishads. The ancient Vedas of India record an advance from the polytheistic worship of the countless forces or aspects of nature toward the conviction that all divine powers are basically one. Sky god, wind god, fire god—all these are phases of each other. To deeper insight they are revealed as different forms of the one primal and final reality. "That One," all-creative and all-dominant, (Visvakarman and Prajapati), is Brahman. So begins a mystical chant in the *Maitri Upanishad:*

Thou art Brahma, and verily thou art Vishnu.
Thou art Rudra. Thou art Prajapati.
Thou art Agni, Varuna, and Vayu.
Thou art Indra. Thou art the Moon.
Thou art food. Thou art Yama. Thou art the Earth.
Thou art All. Yea, thou art the unshaken one!

Brahman, the infinite reality, is all -pervading. The world of particular things may seem manifold and unstable, but it is one and eternally real in its infinite essence. That is Atman, the soul or inner principle of every single thing, one with the all-permeating Brahman. The pantheistic meditations of the seers in the Upanishads had one supreme purpose: to advance from the surface view of Maya, the illusory perception of the world of countless things, to the penetrating insight into the unity of them all in God.

In classical antiquity the pantheistic strain found initial philosophical expression in monism, the doctrine that the boundless variety of things is rooted in one primal substance: water or air or some infinite stuff or core of all existence. This monism was unstable in ancient classical thought. On the one hand, the problem of reconciling change and permanence led Greek minds towards pluralism. Nature was portrayed as a process of ever-shifting combinations of unchanging particles. On the other hand, the basic distinction of matter and mind gave a dualistic turn to philosophical reflection, especially notable in Platonism. The most thoroughly pantheistic view of nature in Greece and Rome was the philosophical religion of the Stoic sages. According to Cicero, Cleanthes the Stoic taught that the world itself is God. More clearly, however, the Stoics regarded God as the world-soul. They called all existence material, but they reinterpreted matter to signify the universal reality of nature in all its forms from the lowest to the highest. The highest permeates and rules the lowest. Like fire consuming and transforming all things, like germinating reason vitalizing all beings, God is manifest in all things, directs and permeates them all.

Modern forms of pantheistic speculation have followed mainly two patterns: the monism of Spinoza and idealistic

pantheism. Spinoza reinterpreted the problem of the relation of mind and matter. In his metaphysics body and mind are regarded, not as two different substances, but as two attributes of the One Infinite Substance, which he called "God or Nature." There is a bodily phase and there is a mental phase of existence, and these correspond to each other. Our progress in understanding must proceed from the random perception of various things, bodily or mental states, to the true rational knowledge of things and ideas in their order and relation to each other. Thus we can see each thing as a mode or phase of the one infinite God or Nature, see all things in their universal context, in their cosmic setting, "under the pattern of eternity." This was Spinoza's philosophical religion, finding its summit in his *amor intellectualis Dei*, the intellectual or the understanding love of God.

For many of Spinoza's contemporaries, his pantheism of the One Infinite Substance was only an ambiguous form of atheism. The doctrine of God or Nature was in its effect, as they read it, a godless doctrine. It reduced God to nature and found no ultimate provision for the moral-spiritual values of personality, without which the terms God or divine had no real meaning which religion could recognize. After being scorned for more than a century as a system of impiety, Spinoza's philosophy was revived and revised in a more spiritual version during the period of modern idealism. A whole generation of productive thinkers in philosophy and literature, reacting more immediately to the dominant influence of Kant, turned also to Spinoza and reinterpreted significantly his pantheistic doctrine. Spinoza's "God or Nature" came to signify to them "Nature or God." Schelling described nature as dormant or latent Spirit. Goethe viewed nature as the divine drama, instinct with all the potencies of

spirit which it manifests in the creative achievements of our minds. The romanticists extolled Spinoza as the God-intoxicated man.

In his concentration on the One Infinite Substance, God or Nature, Spinoza had not given due consideration to the distinctive reality and activity of finite individuals. For him the true reality of particular beings could be seen only in their relation to the Infinite. This aspect of Spinoza's philosophy was not convincing to those idealists who had learned from Kant to respect the unique and inviolable moral dignity and worth of each person. Some of them regarded the particular determinations of the divine reality as having their own distinctive rôles. In individual experience and in the system of social-institutional life, these idealists developed the guiding principle of moral philosophy: "Be a person, and respect others as persons." But other idealists had pantheistic leanings.

Our brief survey of the historical development of pantheism has brought us repeatedly to its basic problem, namely, its interpretation of the unique status and destiny of persons. This problem should be examined more directly, by a consideration of what may be called the pantheistic substitutes for personal immortality.

We remarked that Brahmanic India developed most extensively the belief in the transmigration of souls. According to the Brahmanic doctrine of retribution, when a man dies, the law of karma causes his soul to be reborn into another body, high or low, depending on his deserts. All ranks and castes and all conditions of men and animals could be explained in this way. The soul that has lived a beastly life will eventually be reborn in a beast. So we are told: "Those who are of stinking conduct here—the prospect is, indeed, that

they will enter a stinking womb, either the womb of a dog, or the womb of a swine, or the womb of an outcast." Although the reborn soul has no memory of former lives, its present state is that which it has merited by its conduct in some past life. Yet here was the important point: each deed and each life were bound to have their retribution in some future existence, but not necessarily in the next following rebirth. A saint might have to go through hundreds of vile rebirths to expiate his iniquities in former unremembered lives, while a scoundrel might be born next as a holy Brahmin in requital for some immemorial righteousness.

Thus bound to the wheel of rebirth and not knowing what to expect next, where were men to find a ground for hope and moral resolution? Transmigration has been called "the great bugbear—the terrible nightmare and daymare of Indian philosophers and metaphysicians." The Brahmanic pantheists held transmigration to be a fact, but they refused to accept it as man's ultimate destiny. Their deepest hope was to be released from the cycle of rebirths, and finally to be absorbed into the Infinite Brahman. The atheists (Nastikas) saw only man's bodily life, to be lived here and now, once for all. Gautama Buddha and his disciples preached a gospel of direct release by enlightenment. Denying both the belief in Brahman and the doctrine of a substantial soul, the Buddhists recognized in human life only the ever-changing composition of various bodily and mental states. But in this course of man's existence they traced the law of retribution exacting the necessary consequence of each action. This is the Buddhist law of karma. According to this law, a life of selfish and thoughtless sensuality has its effects in further lives of the same evil sort. A saintly life of true enlightenment, however, by overcoming passion and iniquity and by complete renun-

ciation of egoism in all its forms, may attain the bliss and the peace and the final surcease of Nirvana, the extinguishment of self.

These two radical alternatives, Nastika atheism and Buddhism, are only mentioned here to set off more clearly the Brahmanic-pantheistic solution of the quandary of retributive transmigration. The sages of the Upanishads taught salvation through saintly understanding, salvation as the soul's final absorption in the Infinite Brahman. This is nowise personal immortality, a person's eternal life with God. It is the transcendence of personal existence, its becoming one with God, as a river becomes one with the sea into which it flows and is absorbed. In this blessed state which is the hope of the Brahmanic seers, all the marks of individual existence are transcended:

> What is soundless, touchless, formless, imperishable,
> Likewise tasteless, constant, odorless,
> Without beginning, without end, higher than the great, stable—
> By discerning That, one is liberated from the mouth of death.

Despite the radical differences which separate Brahmanism and Buddhism, both of them ascribe evil to the life of the individual self and seek salvation and blessedness through transcendence of individuality. But neither of them probes thoroughly the important problem of the interrelation of personality and values. We should recognize that personality is the medium for the expression of all values, good as well as bad. The transcendence of persons cannot be regarded only as an emancipation from evil, for it would affect the reality of the whole scale of values. The extolled Brahmanic and Buddhist blessedness by extinction of self is a blessedness without anyone blessed.

A similar strain of ambiguity may be traced in Greek

philosophy. Plato has been proclaimed as the high priest of the belief in the immortality of the soul. While Plato declared in his famous arguments that the career of man's rational soul is eternal, his philosophy conceived of reality as a system of universal principles. He considered particular things as limited by the finitude of the material world of sense. How, then, could we regard individual souls as eternal? This vagueness is even more evident in Aristotle. In his cosmology of form-in-matter, the soul was regarded as the vital principle in a body, its essential character as a living being. The human soul shares some of its capacities or faculties with plants and with animals: its powers to vegetate and grow; its locomotion, sensation and desire. These aspects of our nature cannot be regarded as immortal. The question of man's immortality could only concern his distinctive power of reason. And on this point Aristotle was at best obscure. He recognized the eternal character of the principle of rationality. God is creative reason eternally thinking itself, and the cosmic system of form-in-matter essentially manifests itself in the production of rational nature. But Aristotle did not maintain definitely the immortality of the individual rational persons, of Socrates or Plato. Indeed, a passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* cites the wish for immortality as an instance of desiring impossible things.

The pantheistic problem of human destiny may be examined more particularly in Greek and Roman Stoicism. The Stoics of the earlier Athenian period taught the doctrine of cosmic cycles and the eternal recurrence of all things. In the course of eternity the world goes through every possible stage and form of being. When the whole round of possibilities has been exhausted, a cosmic conflagration marks the end of a world-age, and another aeon repeats the universal drama. In this view of eternal recurrence, how was the span

of a man's career to be conceived? The Stoics in Athens differed in their answers. The founder of the school, Zeno, seems to have advocated not so much the immortality of the soul as its longevity. The soul is of fine stuff and is more durable than the coarse body, but all souls perish eventually. Only the universal World-Soul is imperishable. Zeno's successor, Cleanthes, believed that all men's souls survived through their entire world-age. But the next Stoic leader, Chrysippus, entertained a view of aristocratic distinction. He believed that only the rational souls of sages outlive the death of their bodies. The sensual soul perishes with its body. To be sure, so long as the Stoics held to the belief in world-cycles and eternal recurrence, they contemplated the repetition of all souls and all things in succeeding world-ages. Socrates would again walk the streets of some future Athens, they thought, and so would his shrewish wife, Xantippe.

When Stoicism was introduced into Rome, its advocate, Panaetius, had abandoned the doctrine of world-cycles. The Roman Stoics viewed nature as an ongoing system of the various types or grades of bodies, permeated and directed by the divine providence of Universal Reason. In this materialistic pantheism, every being was determined by the eternal laws appropriate to its nature. Regarding human destiny, the Roman Stoics seem to have proceeded from vague or unsteady advocacy of personal immortality, toward indifference to it, and then to final and explicit rejection of it. These varieties or stages of reflection may be noted successively in Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius.

Cicero combined Stoic beliefs with his Platonism. He noted the disagreements of Stoics about the destiny of the soul. Is the belief in immortality an inference from our doctrine of the soul's nature and its material composition, or does it follow from our ideas of men's deserts and God's justice?

Cicero was not sure, but he did not renounce his faith in divine providence and final rational direction of human destinies. In his perplexity he said that he would rather go astray with Plato than be right in agreeing with those who reject immortality. Seneca wrote letters of consolation to friends in their bereavement, and he could give some eloquent expressions of the immortal hope; but his words lacked the tone of firm and reasoned conviction. "Perhaps," he wrote to his friend Lucilius, "if only the tale told by wise men is true, and there is a bourne to welcome us, then he whom we think we have lost has only been sent on ahead." But he also spoke of death as the final cessation and nullity of us all.

Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius proceeded to serene negation of the belief in immortality. Epictetus had moral as well as metaphysical grounds for his indifference to the traditional belief. God alone is eternal. Every particular being is in its nature a finite and impermanent composition of various materials. "God gives the signal for retreat; he opens the door and says to you: Go. Go whither? . . . To the elements: what there was in you of fire, goes to fire; of earth, to earth; of air (spirit), to air; of water, to water." Every soul in common with everything else in nature has its appointed place and time; it comes like the hour, and like the hour it must pass. This is the necessary rational order of things, and to complain of it as unjust is petulant and unseemly before God. To make appeal to rewarding and punishing justice in the hereafter is to misunderstand the true nature of virtue and vice. Virtue is its own reward, here and now; and vice is its own punishment and ruin. To seek a future recompense for a virtuous life is to follow reason and God not righteously but for hire. The tribulations of the good life as well as its joys have their worth in themselves, and we have no just grounds for further

claims or complaints. Marcus Aurelius concluded on a note of resigned serenity: "Depart then with good grace; for he who dismisses thee is gracious."

The materialistic description of the system of nature and even of God always allowed for the Platonic protest that the rational mind is not material and is not subject to the dissolution of bodies. Spinoza's philosophy was distinguished by its rejection both of materialism and of cosmological dualism. By regarding mind and body as essential attributes of nature, Spinoza's pantheism brought out the basic relation of the finite and the infinite in his treatment of the problem of personal immortality.

Spinoza agreed with the Stoics in rejecting any claim to immortal blessedness as a reward for virtue. "Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but is virtue itself." The life of rational insight is its own warrant and justifies itself by its inherent excellence. It is worthy to be chosen in preference to the life of ignorance and passion, irrespective of the duration of human existence.

Spinoza, however, was aware of a problem which the Stoics had not recognized sufficiently: the problem of the nature and cosmic rôle of man's contemplative reason which can emancipate itself from servitude to the passions, can perceive and pursue and achieve truth, can experience the intellectual or understanding love of God. In the concluding fifth part of his *Ethics,* Spinoza wrote of the mind's ability to advance beyond the usual processes of rational inquiry to what he called *scientia intuitiva,* intuitive knowledge, by which we grasp eternal truths directly. We are reminded of Kepler's conviction that at the climax of his scientific contemplation he was thinking God's thoughts after him. Doesn't the mind in its highest activity rise above its ordinary relation to the body, reach beyond the finite bounds of mortality?

Earlier, in his *Short Treatise*, Spinoza had distinguished two aspects or two rôles of the mind. On the one hand, mind is the idea or the mental aspect of the body, and like the body it is particular, finite, and mortal. On the other hand, mind is united with God, can neither be nor be known without God, and, like God, is unchangeable and eternal. This conviction of Spinoza found fuller expression in his *Ethics*. Even while living our bodily life, we can know the ultimate essence of our body, know it as God knows it. This highest mode of thinking is necessarily eternal, and through it the mind conceives itself as eternal.

At this point it is important not to confuse Spinoza's doctrine with the traditional beliefs in personal immortality. The mind's eternity which Spinoza contemplated did not include any individual memories or ordinary consciousness. He rejected the common opinion of men who "confuse eternity with duration, and ascribe it to the imagination or the memory which they believe to remain after death." In its highest knowledge, "intuitive science," the mind attains divine insight, but this summit of rationality does not signify eternal continuance of individual existence. Spinoza's eternity is beyond duration and time; it is timeless infinitude, like that of the eternal truths. Spinoza was not speaking of a person's immortal life and career after death, but of the mind's capacity even now to think the truths of eternity. Thus being even now with God, that is, contemplating the nature of things in their eternal pattern, why should one be concerned about death? "A free man," he wrote, "thinks of nothing less than of death, and his wisdom is not a meditation upon death, but upon life." There was Spinoza's body smitten with consumption and day by day drawing closer to its doom, and there were his daily feelings, fears, and desires, all of them finite and transitory. But there was also his reason that knew

the essential nature of his bodily life and concentrated itself on ultimate and eternal understanding. He was that consumptive body, but he was also a mind consecrated to the truths of eternity, and he was convinced that "the human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it remains which is eternal." One side of him was individual, finite, and mortal; but on the other side he could get beyond finite individuality and, by grasping truth, share in the eternity of the Infinite.

It can be seen that Spinoza's pantheism recognized an eternal character in the highest intellectual activities of human life. But the question still remained: in the attainment of this eternal character, is the individual wholly absorbed in the Infinite, or does some significant distinction remain between man and God? Spinoza denied the eternal duration of memory or imagination, but did he not recognize unique characteristics in each mind's rational contemplation or intuition, unique values of each personality, which are never quite effaced? By raising these questions in our minds, even though he does not answer them, Spinoza may lead us to the modern idealistic approach to the problem of immortality.

The guiding principle in the idealistic reinterpretation of human destiny is of central importance in the philosophy of religion. It affects the basic conception of both God and man. Here Kant's far-reaching influence is twofold. It is ineffectual in sustaining the old reliance on a rewarding and punishing Divine Providence, but it advances to new ground of confidence in the conservation and enhancement of personal values. In his ethics of pure devotion to duty, Kant advocated two moral arguments for immortality. The first is a reformulation of the old argument of rewards and punishments in the hereafter. Although morality demands the consecration of the righteous will to duty, without any regard for

consequences, yet we are bound to recognize that in a rational universe under God's judgment virtue must ultimately lead to happiness consummated beyond this life in the hereafter. Kant's statement of this argument is not proof against the objections to its earlier theological versions, and it is not advocated in the true spirit of his moral rigorism. It is Kant's second argument which marks his real advance of thought. Here he proceeded from an analysis of the moral act itself. Every moral decision reveals the will as identifying itself with an ideal perfect value, despite the drag of the desires and inclinations and despite the will's inadequate performance. The moral agent is committed to an ideal course which no finite series of actions can ever consummate. In the world of nature we have our finite span of time and mortality, but as members of the world of values our career is the eternal pursuit of perfection.

It should be clear that Kant reinterpreted both the idea of God and the idea of personal immortality in terms of the principle of perfection. He regarded the traditional theoretical arguments for God's existence as invalid or insufficient. He advocated the belief in God as a postulate of morality. God was for him the center and the summit of the world of values. If we take morality seriously, then we must recognize that our dutiful pursuit of perfection is not the pursuit of an illusion but of an ideally infinite and perfect reality. Our moral destiny as persons is an eternal devotion to the Eternal.

The bearing of pantheism on personal immortality may now be seen in a new light. Our inquiry is concerned with the essential character of value and value activity. We could pursue this topic in its extensive historical development and consider the various applications or criticisms of Kant's doctrine by modern thinkers. But perhaps we have had already enough historical reviews, and it would be better now to

distinguish clearly the main alternative ways of thought which a philosophy of religion should appraise in testing its grounds of faith regarding human destiny.

The scientific view of nature combines experimental evidence with theoretical analysis and construction. Our analogous procedure in dealing with the reality of values should likewise combine the direct evidence of values in the various fields of our activity with the systematic appraisal of the principal characteristics of values and the organization of these characteristics in some convincing pattern. Here the chief problem seems to be one of the right distribution of emphasis. Values are known to us in our personal experience, unique in each individual yet generally social in their development. Actually finite as we know them in our daily activity, values are infinite in their ideal implications. They have their own meaning in the present scene, but the range of their perfection is boundless and eternal.

We may test this account in our own minds and see how the principal values manifest these various aspects.

Intellectual value, truth, expresses characteristically its finite-infinite qualities. Our truths as we know them are definitely relative in their basis of validity and in their range of application, but every one of them points toward an infinite summit of Truth as its ideal and standard. Intellectual progress is the self-revision and self-reconstitution of our truths in accordance with this ideal.

Aesthetic values as they are embodied in works of art seem, even at best, to be the recaptured memories of ideal visions. Was it Shelley who wrote that the most glorious poem must be a feeble shadow of the creative experience which gave it birth? Lucretius bewailed the poverty of his Latin speech, that it could not convey the fullness of his

poetic meaning. Dante, at a crucial turn in his *Divine Comedy,* exclaimed:

> O ye who have sound understanding, mark,
> Mark well the doctrine which is hidden here
> Under the veiling of these verses dark.

Great music and great poetry always mean more than they say. In finite vestures of tone or speech, they seek to express infinite significance and beauty.

The values of the moral and the religious life manifest the same duality of character. Justice is obviously social in its field of realization, yet it is unique and individual in each instance of claim and counter claim. It has very definite requirements in each specific case, yet is never finally achieved; for justice raises its aims as it attains them, and ever points beyond itself to a surpassing ideal. Religious experience provides the most sublime instances of this dual intent of value activity. Religion applies the speech of the most intimate personal life to express our relation to God—to God before whose infinite and eternal reality our every word, finite and limited at best, unsays itself and becomes dumb. Yet though theology contemplates Deity as transcendent and ultimate, we worship God as our Father. These two sides of contending emphasis provide the perennial antiphony of religious utterance.

We observed that our main problem here seems to be one of the right distribution of emphasis in interpreting the nature of value. If we overemphasize either the aspect of value as finite, empirical, and temporal—or the aspect of value as infinite, transcendent, and eternal, we become embroiled in difficulties from which only the fair recognition of the other neglected aspect can deliver us. The right course would seem to be one of mediation and balance; but again, which way should we incline?

The pantheist overemphasizes the aspect of infinitude in value in having perfect reality pervade and absorb all finite individuals. The pantheistic tendencies of some modern idealists may be noted in their unsteady estimate of the rôle and destiny of persons. While the Kantian principle of the unique value and inviolable dignity of each man is reaffirmed as a basic moral law governing all social relations, the ultimate recognition of this principle in some idealistic philosophies of religion is very ambiguous. Man's aspiration toward communion and union with God is acknowledged as his characteristic striving for perfection, his finite will reaching toward infinitude. But if the Infinite is then proclaimed as alone truly real and as absorbing into itself all finite values and persons, do we not lose an essential aspect of the values that we experience and know? One example of this pantheistic slant of reflection may suffice here. Schleiermacher's mystical conception of God led him to indecision regarding personal immortality. He declared: "In the midst of the finite, to be one with the Infinite, to be eternal every moment, that is the immortality of religion." This is a fine statement of the spiritual life, but is it an adequate answer to the question about human destiny? Note how a bereaved wife was led by the very intensity of her grief to force the question. Henrietta von Mühlenfels pondered over the death of her husband. "His soul is absorbed, quite melted in the great All." This she had learned from Schleiermacher. But it was not enough, it was not clear. "When I loved and knew God in my Ehrenfried, there were two objects of my love. . . . Now that he has left me alone and 'is living eternally with God,' are they still two lives, or only one?"

Analogous to pantheism in religion is the absolutism of some idealistic metaphysicians. They question the true reality of any being or any activity or any value except the capital-

ized Absolute One. This type of philosophy has a sceptical tone, for it tends to relegate all the small type truths and values familiar to our experience to the limbo of mere appearance.

Consider on the other hand the opposite overemphasis on the finite empirical character of values as manifested in the daily activities of individuals and social groups. This view espouses the principle of relativism, and in its own way it also has a sceptical tinge. All values are for it limited and transitory; in its preoccupation with the finite-empirical aspect of personal existence it discounts the hope of personal immortality. Most rigid denial characterizes materialistic naturalism, which sees human life with all its mental activity as necessarily dependent on biological processes, dependent all the way through, and so subject to the changes and vicissitudes of the material world. Other forms of naturalism may not be so explicit in asserting that mind is merely an event in physical nature or an aptitude of the body, but they also emphasize the empirical and transitory character of men's careers. Human values, according to them, are incident to the conditions and reactions of men in their environment. They have their causes which produce, modify, and develop them, or which unsettle them and eventually extinguish them. To assert the abiding reality of persons or to hope for their immortality is to indulge in illusions. The persistence of human values is relative. The only sense in which a man may be said to outlive his body is in his continued social participation in the lives of others in their memory of him or in his influence on them. Men can aspire toward abiding worth in only one way, by identifying themselves actively with the larger life of civilization. But it may readily be seen that this sort of persistence is also relative. Civilizations and historical epochs are likewise transitory in the end.

We are thus confronted with our basic alternatives. Naturalism, whether materialistic or not, suffers from the perplexity of maintaining the rational validity of its principles while at the same time questioning the distinctive abiding reality of rational values. Reason cannot thus reason itself out of existence. Pantheism shares with other spiritual interpretations of the world the advantage of recognizing the essential character of values, but in a onesided emphasis. Its merit is that it perceives the infinite-divine implications of values. Its defect is that it does not do justice to the individual and social expressions of rationality and values which are also fundamental to our understanding of them. The problem of personal immortality is thus a problem of achieving a reasonable balance, of finding a mediating course of thought that does not go to either extreme nor fail to keep in touch with both alternatives. Unless we maintain firmly the human and personal reality of values, we are lost eventually in universal abstractions. Yet personal values as we know them in the daily lives and careers of men involve finite and transitory forms of expression, both physical and mental. Apart from these actualities we should scarcely be able to conceive values.

Is it surprising that in this predicament men's hopes have sought to secure from their imagination the vivid conviction which reason does not yield? So we have the visions of golden streets and pearly gates, and likewise of hell and its torments, and all the rest of men's imaginings about the hereafter. Philosophical criticism has been needed to emancipate religious faith from its fancies and superstitions. But the basic assurance of the abiding character and destiny of personality has not been utterly discredited, for reflection and reason themselves would then be discredited. On this ridge between opposite precarious declivities, our thought about our destiny

must find its way. Religious meditation has cherished and preserved its fundamental certainty that man's spiritual worth is inextinguishable. Without pride but also without doubt, saintly men have believed firmly and hoped confidently that the eternal values to which they have consecrated themselves are eternal not only in God, not only in abstract universality, but eternal also in their own unique personal character. This confident belief and hope has been the core of the idea of personal immortality. Pantheism has veiled this idea in ambiguity, but has not confuted it.

RADOSLAV A. TSANOFF